

What does the Bible say about marriage?

When we speak of Christian marriage we are talking about marriage which is based on God's instruction and purpose for marriage as found in His Bible. While the below passages are not exhaustive in covering the whole scope of God's teaching on marriage they are helpful in providing an outline of some basic Biblical teaching regarding Christian marriage. These verses provide a glimpse of the "big picture" of what the Bible teaches about marriage.

I. MARRIAGE IS INSTITUTED AND BLESSED BY GOD

A. GOD BRINGS EVE TO ADAM SO THAT.... (Genesis 2:18-25)

1. Adam will not be alone (v. 18)
2. Adam will have a helper/companion (v. 18)
3. Adam will loyally be joined to Eve (v. 24)
4. They shall become one flesh (vv. 23, 24)
5. Sexual intercourse is viewed as the consummation of the marriage (v. 24)
6. They will live in openness and community with each other (v. 25)

B. SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF MARRIAGES, BLESSED BY GOD ARE GIVEN IN SCRIPTURE. A FEW NOTABLE EXAMPLES ARE:

1. Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:1-21)
2. Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 25:20-26)
3. Boaz and Ruth (Ruth)
4. Solomon and his Shulamite bride (Song of Solomon). This book is included in Scripture as an example of courtship and marriage.
5. Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11)

II. MARRIAGE IS AN EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN

A. MARRIAGE JOINS THE MALE AND FEMALE IMAGE OF GOD

1. Man and woman are distinct as the image of God (Genesis 1:26)
2. Marriage joins the images together as one (Genesis 2:24)
3. This joining is ideally a bringing together of "two wholes" to make a "whole"
 - a. God brought a man and a woman together as the highest ideal of marriage (Genesis 2:22)
 - b. Being married to one spouse is the highest ideal of the marriage relationship and community (1 Timothy 3:2,12; Titus 1:6)

B. SCRIPTURE CONDEMNS SEXUAL INTERCOURSE BETWEEN ANY HUMANS EXCEPT A MALE AND A FEMALE MARRIED TO EACH OTHER

1. Lesbianism and homosexuality are condemned (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9)
2. Adultery and fornication are condemned (Exodus 20:14; Acts 15:22-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 7:1,2; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5; Hebrews 12:4). Note: The following definitions are of help:
 - a. Adultery (Greek = μοιχεία "moicheia") = Sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his/her spouse.
 - b. Fornication (Greek = πορνεία "porneia") = Sexual intercourse outside the bonds of marriage (ie. between two unmarried or married people not married to each other).

3. Chastity prior to marriage is given as the highest ideal (1 Corinthians 7:1,2,8,9; Hebrews 13:4). Note: The following definitions are of help:
 - a. Honor (Greek = τιμιος “timios”) = Precious, in comparison valued more highly than any others.
 - b. undefiled (Greek = αμιαντος “amiantos”) = Free from contamination, sin, fault, blemish (Note also Matthew 1:25; that Joseph, according to Jewish tradition blessed by God, kept Mary a virgin until they were married.).

III. MARRIAGE IS IDEALLY A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BELIEVERS

A. BELIEVERS MARRYING BELIEVERS IS THE IDEAL

1. We are not to be unequally joined (2 Corinthians 6:14,18)
2. Struggle, conflict, and uncertainty result from unequal union (1 Corinthians 7:10-17)
3. Without being “born of God” we cannot express His ideal love to our spouse (1 John 4:7-21)
4. Principles listed under III.B.1-4 are given exclusively to members of the Body of Christ; the Church, believers (Ephesians 5:30-33)

B. GOD’S LOVE IS THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF MARITAL LOVE

1. We are to love each other as Jesus has loved us (Ephesians 5:1,2). NOTE: Without personally knowing Jesus’ love and having a relationship with Him we cannot be a channel of His love. We cannot give what we do not possess.
2. We are subject to each other in respect/honor of Jesus (Ephesians 5:21)
3. Wives maintain respect for their husbands as they would respect Jesus (Ephesians 5:22-30)
4. Husbands are to serve their wives according to the example of Jesus (Ephesians 5:25-30)
5. God’s love is selfless commitment for the “long haul.”
 - a. God is the definition of love (1 John 4:8). NOTE: The Greek word “αγαπη” (agape) is used here to indicate love which is committed beyond friendship and beyond erotic love. “agape” love perseveres and is long suffering (1 Corinthians 13)
 - b. God demonstrates His love towards us through Jesus (Romans 5:8)
 - c. God’s love is the example of how we are to accept each other (Romans 15:1-7)

C. MARRIAGE IS A PARTNERSHIP

1. Adam and Eve were brought together to help each other (Genesis 2:18) complete God’s command of stewardship over the earth (Genesis 1:26-30)
2. The husband has headship in the marriage relationship
 - a. Husbands are accountable to God through Jesus for leadership in the marriage (1 Corinthians 11:3)
 - b. Husbands are responsible for the spiritual direction of the marriage (Ephesians 5:23,25,28,29)
 - c. Wives are to be respectful of their husband’s headship (Ephesians 5:24)
3. Marriage is a partnership of equals
 - a. Both male and female are equally the image of God (Genesis 1:26)
 - b. In Jesus, male and female stand with equal individual spiritual responsibility before God (Galatians 3:28)
4. As one flesh, both male and female are joined as the image of God (Genesis 2:23,24)
 - a. Sexual intercourse graphically joins the two in an emotional, physical, and spiritual union (Genesis 2:24,25)
 - b. Distortions/refraining from this equal joining hinders the couple’s effectiveness for each other and God (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)